



Virginia Water Withdrawal Reporting Regulation (VWWR) Agricultural Production and Crop Irrigation Frequently Asked Questions

****The following questions deal solely with the VWWR ([9VAC25-200](#)). For additional information on surface water and groundwater impacts please read the Virginia Water Protection Permit Program Regulation, ([9VAC25-210](#)) and the Groundwater Withdrawal Regulations ([9VAC25-610](#)).**

1. How does a producer¹ determine whether they are required to report their water withdrawals for agricultural production and/or crop irrigation?

The Virginia Water Withdrawal Regulation ([9VAC25-200](#)) requires the reporting of any withdrawal (groundwater or surface water) for crop irrigation if the withdrawals for any single month meet or exceed one million gallons. DEQ estimates that both of the following examples, if one or the other were to occur during the course of one month, will meet the withdrawal threshold for crop irrigation:

- irrigating 37 acres at a depth of one inch
- irrigating for over 65 hours with a 250 GPM pump

Crop irrigators do not need to report withdrawals from storm water ponds or ponds collecting runoff unless the ponds are situated on a perennial stream as shown on a USGS quad² or are dug to a depth that intercepts the groundwater table.

All other agricultural production withdrawals such as those for livestock watering, cooling, and facility cleaning require reporting if the daily average withdrawal (groundwater or surface water) during any single month exceeds 10,000 gallons per day. Examples of farms that most likely meet agricultural production thresholds include dairies with 350 or more lactating cows, feedlots with 600 or more cattle, and a farm with more than 150,000 broilers.

Please note that the withdrawal threshold for water withdrawal reporting is different than the thresholds for groundwater and surface water permitting. For more information on permitting thresholds, contact DEQ and refer to the Virginia Water Protection Permit Program Regulation, ([9VAC25-210](#)) and the Groundwater Withdrawal Regulations ([9VAC25-610](#)).

2. Does a producer need to report water withdrawals of livestock that drink directly from a water source?

No, only those groundwater or surface water withdrawals that are initiated by humans and occur from a specific point are required to report to the VWWR. Although not required, the amount of water withdrawn directly from a water source by livestock may be estimated and reported voluntarily.

3. A producer's farming operation includes multiple farms that are contiguous³ to each other. Are the separate withdrawals at each farm added together to determine if the reporting threshold is met?

Yes, withdrawal sources on contiguous farming operations are added together to determine if the reporting threshold is met. Remember, as referenced in question one, the withdrawal threshold for crop irrigation is different from the threshold for all other agricultural purposes.

¹ A producer is defined here as either the owner of the farm(s) or the person leasing the farm(s) that is responsible for the farming operation and withdrawing the water.

² USGS quadrangle maps can be viewed or downloaded here: <https://ngmndb.usgs.gov/topoview/viewer/#7/38.009/-79.459>. Click your location on the map or type it into the search bar, select a scale by clicking the '24k' circle, and choose the most recent map for your area.

³ Contiguous means farms are next to each other, not separated by parcels not owned or operated by the farm.

4. Does a producer need to report separately the withdrawals used for livestock and crop irrigation?

If your farm has both livestock and crop irrigation, and you meet the threshold for either, you need to report your total withdrawal. Withdrawal volumes for livestock and crop irrigation may be listed separately in the reporting form if they are from separate intake points, or can be measured separately. Withdrawal volumes for livestock and crop irrigation may be combined on the reporting form if they are from the same intake point, or it is otherwise not practical to measure them separately.

5. A producer's farming operation includes multiple farms that are NOT contiguous. Are the withdrawals at each farm added together to determine if the reporting threshold is met or are the withdrawals counted separately?

If the farms are not contiguous (i.e. separated by parcels not owned/operated by the farm), but depend on the water from the same source water intake(s) for the operations on all farms, then it would be considered one system. In that case, the withdrawals for all non-contiguous farms would be added together to determine the reporting threshold. If those farms operate independently, and do not use water from the same intakes, then the withdrawals for each farm would be kept separate when determining if the reporting threshold is met.

6. If a producer irrigates on two separate farms, one owned and the second leased, is the producer responsible for reporting the withdrawals from both farms? If so, are the withdrawals added together to determine if the reporting threshold is met and reported or are the withdrawals counted separately?

Yes, the person responsible for the farming operation and withdrawing the water is responsible for reporting water withdrawals, regardless of ownership. See the answers to questions 3 and 4 above to determine whether the withdrawals at each farm are added together or counted separately towards meeting the threshold for reporting.

7. If a VVWR registered producer does not irrigate during the calendar year, are they still required to fill out a form (hardcopy or online) for DEQ?

Yes, a response is still required. The hardcopy forms include a space for the producer to mark "no withdrawal this year". In the VAHydro online forms, enter zeros for the monthly withdrawal amounts.

8. Is it true that withdrawals for agricultural production and/or crop irrigation may be required to obtain a Virginia Water Protection (VWP) Permit or a Groundwater Withdrawal Permit (GWP)?

Yes, depending on the amount of water withdrawn and the year in which the withdrawal was initiated, some withdrawals are required to obtain a withdrawal permit from the DEQ. Statewide, agricultural surface water withdrawals from nontidal waters that total one million gallons or more in a single month, and from tidal waters totaling 60 million gallons or more in a single month, may be required to obtain a VWP permit. For example, a farm using nontidal surface water to irrigate 37 acres at a depth of one inch may be required to obtain a VWP permit. Groundwater withdrawals that occur within a groundwater management area and total greater than 300,000 gallons per month are required to obtain a GWP. As an example, a producer in a Groundwater Management Area that uses wells to water 600 cattle in a feedlot or 350 or more lactating cows may be required to obtain a GWP permit. VWP and GWP permit fees are waived for agricultural producers.

9. May producers estimate their withdrawal amounts or is a metering device required?

A metering device is preferred; however, if a meter is not available, producers may estimate their withdrawal amounts. The estimation method used by the producer must be provided on the reporting form. DEQ provides information on how to calculate irrigation and livestock watering withdrawals in a document entitled, [Estimating Raw Water Withdrawals](https://www.deq.virginia.gov/water/water-quantity/water-supply-planning/water-withdrawal-reporting), found on the DEQ website: <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/water/water-quantity/water-supply-planning/water-withdrawal-reporting>

10. The threshold for reporting agriculture withdrawals was met only one day during the year. Does the producer report that single day's amount, or are they required to report their withdrawals for the entire year?

If the threshold for reporting is met on a single day during the year, monthly withdrawals for the entire year must be reported. As always, if the threshold for reporting is not met, DEQ welcomes the voluntary reporting of lesser withdrawal amounts.

11. If a farm that currently reports water withdrawals is sold or leased to another producer, how does the new producer register with the Virginia Water Withdrawal Reporting Regulation (VWWR)?

The producer should contact DEQ's Water Supply Planning staff to register their operation with the VWWR. Reference the contact map (attached separately) to identify your regional Water Supply Planner.

12. If a stream/river is drying up due to withdrawals, and this occurrence is reported to DEQ, what will happen to the withdrawers?

If a complaint is received by DEQ, staff will schedule an inspection to evaluate impacts to the stream. Depending on the inspection results, compliance actions may be taken.

If you have further questions, identify your regional Water Supply Planner using the contact map attached separately, or view the map online at: <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/10776/637680036050170000>